Stanford



# Usha Iyer

Associate Professor of Art and Art History

Art & Art History

## Bio

### BIO

Usha Iyer's research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of cinema, performance, and gender and sexuality studies, with a specific focus on Global South cultural traffic along the vectors of race, gender, caste, and religion.

Iyer (she/they) is the author of Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema (Oxford University Press, 2020), which examines constructions of gender, stardom, sexuality, and spectacle in Hindi cinema through women's labor, collaborative networks, and gestural genealogies to produce a corporeal history of South Asian cultural modernities. The book was awarded the British Association of South Asian Studies Book Prize, and shortlisted for the Oscar G. Brockett Book Prize for Dance Research by the Dance Studies Association.

Iyer's current book project, Jammin': Black and Brown Media Intimacies between India and the Caribbean (under contract with Columbia University Press), studies the deep affective engagement of Caribbean spectators with Indian cinema in relation to discourses of belonging and citizenship that have developed around the histories of African enslavement and Indian indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, and Guyana. The book equally attends to the impact of Caribbean cultural forms on Indian film industries. This project engages with crucial questions of racial, religious, gender, and caste frictions and solidarities across locations that are not often studied alongside each other.

Iyer is co-editing with Manishita Dass the volume, Shift Focus: Reframing the Indian New Waves (under contract with Oxford University Press). This anthology brings together a diverse group of scholars to examine the unexplored cultural, political, and aesthetic genealogies, impulses, and resonances of the Indian New Waves.

Iyer's essays have appeared in journals like Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies, Journal of Cinema and Media Studies, Feminist Media Histories, South Asian Popular Culture, BioScope: South Asian Screen Studies, as well as in anthologies and edited collections, including, The Oxford Handbook of Film Theory, A Companion to Indian Cinema, Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India, Figurations in Indian Film, among others. Iyer is Associate Editor of South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies, and serves on the editorial board of Film History.

Iyer serves as faculty director of Stanford's Center for South Asia. They are affiliate faculty in the Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity, and in the Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program. Their research has been supported by fellowships from The George A. and Eliza Gardner Howard Foundation, Stanford Humanities Center, Clayman Institute of Gender Research, among others. They were an Annenberg Faculty Fellow, School of the Humanities and Sciences (2022-2024).

More information on publications at: https://stanford.academia.edu/UshaIyer

### ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Associate Professor, Art & Art History

### ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Faculty director, Stanford Center for South Asia, (2025- present)
- Area head, Film and Media Studies, (2023- present)
- Director of Undergraduate Studies, Film and Media Studies Program, Dept of Art and Art History, (2017-2020)

### HONORS AND AWARDS

- “Inspiring Early Academic Career Award”, Stanford Faculty Women’s Forum (2023)

### BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Faculty Steering Committee, Center for South Asia (2019 - present)
- Faculty Steering Committee, Center for Comparative Studies of Race and Ethnicity (2019 - present)

### PROGRAM AFFILIATIONS

- Center for Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity (CCSRE)

### PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

- PhD, University of Pittsburgh , Film Studies (2014)
- MA, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, India , Literary and Cultural Studies (2006)
- MA, University of Pune, India , Mass Communication (1996)

### LINKS

- New Books Network: Dancing Women by Usha Iyer: https://newbooksnetwork.com/dancing-women
- Society for Cinema and Media Studies Aca-Media podcast interview, 2019: http://www.aca-media.org/episode50?fbclid=IwAR06EYkgW-QjeISmgJhiOdnSJBMyfbX9QZqFznuVnQj2QO6kRAjyPQf9-04
- Feature on "Dancing Women": https://humsci.stanford.edu/feature/womens-agency-expressed-through-dance-hindi-cinema
- "Examining the unexcavated histories of Hindi cinema's dancing women": https://gender.stanford.edu/news-publications/gender-news/examining-unexcavated-histories-hindi-cinemas-dancing-women
- Stanford Global Studies Course Innovation Grants: https://news.stanford.edu/thedish/2019/09/04/three-stanford-faculty-awarded-global-issue-course-innovation-grants/
- "Folded Corporeal Histories of the 1950s-60s Hindi Film Dancer-Actress" (UC Santa Cruz, Center for South Asian Studies, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k7DtbnT15QE&feature=emb_logo
- "Dancer-Actresses as Choreographers of New Mobilities" (Columbia University, South Asia Institute, 2020): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cUtuSdX8c3A&t=4381s

## Research & Scholarship

### CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Film studies, South Asia, Caribbean, Gender, Diaspora, Race and ethnicity

## Teaching

### COURSES

**2026-27**

- Graduate Pedagogy: ARTHIST 405A (Win)
- History of World Cinema III: Queer Cinemas Around the World: ARTHIST 164, ARTHIST 364, CSRE 102C, CSRE 302C, FEMGEN 100C, FILMEDIA 100C, FILMEDIA 300C, GLOBAL 193, GLOBAL 390, TAPS 100C, TAPS 300C (Spr)
- Introduction to Film Study: CSRE 5, FILMEDIA 4 (Win)

**2025-26**

- Close Cinematic Analysis: Caste, Sexuality, and Religion in Indian Media: ARTHIST 199, ASNAMST 108, FILMEDIA 101, FILMEDIA 301, TAPS 101F (Aut)
- Intimacies as Method: Studying Black and Brown Relation: ARTHIST 267, ARTHIST 467, FILMEDIA 267, FILMEDIA 467 (Spr)
- Introduction to Film Study: CSRE 5, FILMEDIA 4 (Aut)

**2024-25**

- Graduate Pedagogy: ARTHIST 405A (Win)
- Introduction to Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity: ARTHIST 98, CSRE 100, EDUC 166C, ENGLISH 172D, FILMEDIA 98, PSYCH 155, SOC 146, TAPS 165 (Spr)
- Introduction to Film Study: FILMEDIA 4 (Win)
- Migrant Media in New York City: SINY 15 (Aut)
- Revisiting the Indian New Wave: Infrastructures & Ideologies of Art Cinema in the Postcolony: ARTHIST 495, FILMEDIA 495 (Spr)

**2023-24**

- Close Cinematic Analysis - Caste, Sexuality, and Religion in Indian Media: ASNAMST 108, FEMGEN 104, FILMEDIA 101, FILMEDIA 301, TAPS 101F (Aut)
- Decolonial Approaches to African Arts: FILMEDIA 214 (Spr)
- Decolonization and Decoloniality: Theory, Praxis, and Pedagogy: ARTHIST 460, FILMEDIA 460, TAPS 460 (Spr)
- Decolonizing African Arts in Nairobi: OSPGEN 64 (Sum)
- History of World Cinema III: Queer Cinemas around the World: CSRE 102C, CSRE 302C, FEMGEN 100C, FEMGEN 300C, FILMEDIA 100C, FILMEDIA 300C, GLOBAL 193, GLOBAL 390, TAPS 100C, TAPS 300C (Spr)
- Humanities Research Intensive: ENGLISH 9R (Spr)
- Introduction to Film Study: FILMEDIA 4 (Aut)
- The Mindy Kaling Cinematic Universe: ASNAMST 12SI (Spr)

### STANFORD ADVISEES

**Doctoral Dissertation Reader (AC)**

Kay Barrett, Karishma Bhagani, Christian Gonzalez Ho, Delaney Holton, Sunidhi Pacharne

**Undergraduate Minor Advisor**

Jamie Kurtzig

**Doctoral Dissertation Advisor (AC)**

Aatika Singh

**Doctoral (Program)**

Dineo Maine, Prashant Parvataneni

## Publications

### PUBLICATIONS

- **Gender Hauntings at the Border: Qissa's Narration of Partition Through the Trans Body** *BIOSCOPE-SOUTH ASIAN SCREEN STUDIES*

Iyer, U.
2025

- **Writing Film History without Films: Song Booklets and an Archival Hermeneutic of Speculation** *JCMS-JOURNAL OF CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES*
  Iyer, U.
  2024; 63 (5)
- **"Smuggling, Infiltrating, Usurping: Why Globalizing the Film and Media Studies Curriculum is Essential to Decolonizing It."** *The Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*
  Iyer, U.
  2022; 61 (6)
- **A Pedagogy of Reparations Notes toward Repairing the Film and Media Studies Curriculum** *FEMINIST MEDIA HISTORIES*
  Iyer, U.
  2022; 8 (1): 181-193
- **Song-and-Dance Sequence** *BIOSCOPE-SOUTH ASIAN SCREEN STUDIES*
  Iyer, U.
  2021; 12 (1-2): 174-177
- **Dancing Women: Choreographing Corporeal Histories of Hindi Cinema**
  Iyer, U.
  Oxford University Press.2020
- **"Bringing Bharatanatyam to Bombay Cinema: Mapping Tamil-Hindi Film Industry Traffic through Vyjayanthimala's Dancing Body"** *Industrial Networks and Cinemas of India: Shooting Stars, Shifting Geographies and Multiplying Media*
  Iyer, U.
  Routledge.2020; 1
- **"Dispassionate Repetition and the Enfoldings of History"**
  Iyer, U.
  Chatterjee & Lal Art Gallery. Mumbai, India.
  2019 ; Exhibition catalog for the film, Vrindavani Vairagya (Dispassionate Love, Ashish Avikunthak, 2018)
- **"Dance Musicalization: Proposing a Choreomusicological Approach to Hindi Film Song-and-dance Sequences."** *South Asian Popular Culture*
  Iyer, U.
  2017; 15 (2-3): 123-138
- **"Looking for the Past in Pastiche: Intertextuality in Bollywood Song and Dance Sequences."** *Movies, Moves and Music: The Sonic World of Dance Films*
  Iyer, U.
  Equinox Publishing.2016: 207–226
- **"Stardom Ke Peeche Kya Hai?/What Is behind the Stardom? Madhuri Dixit, the Production Number, and the Construction of the Female Star Text in 1990s Hindi Cinema"** *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*
  Iyer, U.
  2015; 30 (3): 129-159
- **"Nevla as Dracula: Figurations of the Tantric as Monster in the Hindi Horror Film"** *Figurations in Indian Film*
  Iyer, U.
  Palgrave Macmillan.2013: 101–115

## PRESENTATIONS

- "Teaching Indian Cinema in Trinidad: Rethinking Globalization Paradigms" - Stanford Global Studies EPIC symposium (May 19, 2018)